DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 031 807 EA 002 479

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Accountability and Governance in Public Education.

Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y.
Report No-SR-32
Pub Date 12 Feb 68
Note-14p.; Adapted from address delivered before the Annual Convention of the Natl. Assn. of Secondary School Principals (Atlantic City, N.J., Feb. 12, 1968).
Available from-Ford Foundation, Office of Reports, 320 East 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10017 (Free).
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC Not Available from EDRS.
Descriptors-Boards of Education, Community Action, Educational Improvement, Educational Innovation, Educationally Disadvantaged, *Evaluation, Foundation Programs, *Governance, Parent Teacher Cooperation, *Principals, Program Evaluation, *Public Education, *School Community Relationship, Teacher Associations

In recent years the focus on accountability and governance in public education has shifted from the individual class and teacher to individual schools and staffs. By the way he applies and coordinates his school's available resources, the principal determines the product of his school, the departing pupil. More effective education is becoming possible as the individual school receives more and better resources and uses more sophisticated ways to measure human potential and productivity. Although community forces are playing an increasingly active role in the area of governance and the determination of school policies and programs, resolving the issues of both governance and accountability turns most realistically on who is to be held accountable for the product of education. It is at the level of the individual school and its principal that these two questions stand the best chance of being faced squarely and resolved fairly. A descriptive list of 10 projects supported by the Ford Foundation and related to the issues of accountability and governance is appended. (JK)

EA 002 479

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# Accountability and Governance in Public Education

by Edward J. Meade, Jr.

A FORD FOUNDATION REPRINT

*Mr. Meade is program officer in charge of Public Education for the Ford Foundation. The following is adapted from an address delivered before the Committee on the Smaller Secondary School at the annual convention of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 12, 1968. Additional copies may be obtained by writing the Ford Foundation, Office of Reports, 320 East 43rd Street, New York, N. Y. 10017.*

*A note on current Public Education activities of the Foundation is on page 12.*

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HAD I addressed this group some eight or so years ago, it is highly likely that the substance of my remarks would have dealt with the internal aspects of the school itself. The chances are I would have discussed the emerging innovations and technologies that make schools more vital and effective instruments of education. Team teaching, non-graded schools, flexible scheduling, large- and small-class grouping, educational television, teaching machines, and better staff utilization are a few of the concerns that preoccupied us as educators at that time.

I'm not suggesting that improving the ways in which schools help youngsters to acquire and apply knowledge, and help them learn to think for themselves, are not matters of continuing importance, particularly to you as principals. But, to a large degree, they are professional concerns. Although society has an interest in these matters, primary responsibility for them belongs to you and the teachers. Rather, other broader and more public issues are today emerging – issues in which the community at large is becoming more and more interested, and less and less patient about their resolution. I shall speak about two of them: accountability and governance.

My definition of accountability in public education is the conventional one: It is the holding responsible of someone or group for the success or failure of individual schools and pupils. Until now, the hard questions of accountability have been avoided or deferred, and generally for good reasons. Legitimate excuses have been offered why measurements, evaluations, and assessments – the

ingredients of accountability – should not be applied to determine the effectiveness of public education.

One reason was poverty. For years it was claimed that the Federal, state, and local governments needed to provide more money for education before schools could be improved and do the job expected of them. This lack of funds prevented the difficult questions of educational assessment from being raised. Everyone was too busy trying to feed the system rather than question it. Today, however, there are more Federal, state, and local funds available – not enough, but more than many educators realistically expected.

### Internal Improvements in the School

Educators also have argued that schools were undernourished in other respects, particularly in regard to teachers. Today our schools have better teachers – still not as good as they could be, perhaps, but better nonetheless – and there are more of them. Teacher-training programs are more sophisticated, and class sizes are getting smaller. In addition, schools have more professional specialists and an array of technological resources at their disposal – everything from a television set to a computer. School organization has been studied and improved by experts in management and organization. There is hardly a school today that has not had a consultant within its walls over the past academic year or two. College professors have found working in schools a useful and productive enterprise – for them and for the schools.

What all this means is that many of the traditional excuses used to defer the question of accountability are no longer valid. Perhaps the only excuse remaining is the lack of technical know-how to develop and implement more precise methods of measurement. Still, even that excuse has a hollow ring since a number of good measuring tools are available.

So, whether we like it or not, the issue of accountability is before us. Already, educators and social scientists are devising guidelines for a national assessment of education. The great outpouring of funds through such legislation as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Vocational Education Act, and the National Defense Education Act has brought demands for an evaluation of the results of these programs.

Still, the issue has been drawn in only very general terms. Congress is receiving only a general outline of a national evaluation of the major programs it has funded. State legislators have not done much more than ask about the effect of increased state aid on school programs. Questions raised by the community about the effectiveness of the local schools are not expected to be answered in precise terms. As yet, it is still not possible to measure exactly the effect of individual school programs on the student.

At the outset, I suggested that eight or so years ago a discussion of the pressing issues in education would have focused on internal improvements in school organization, staff, and program. A decade of innovations in education has now passed and what has happened? Whatever the innovation, almost all

have had the effect of breaking down the isolation of the individual class and the individual teacher. Team teaching, flexible schedules, non-graded programs, technological aids, and improved staff utilization have all made it increasingly difficult to identify the individual class and the classroom teacher in a system of accountability.

### The Shift in Accountability

After a decade of improvement in the content, pedagogy, and organization of education, accountability has been shifted from individual classes and teachers to individual schools and school staffs. The shift has been accomplished by improving the process and the content which go to make up the particular school. A school can now be identified, as it may not always have been, as an organization with a specific set of goals for the pupils it serves. Pupils, teachers, schedules, facilities, and technology are combined and mixed in order to make the school, and not merely the individual class or course, a better vehicle for learning.

Little real change has occurred on a system-wide basis. If there has been any change at the level of the school district or school system, it is cumulative change made up of many different changes in individual schools.

What does this shift in accountability from class to school mean to the principal? Similar to the plant manager in a large industrial corporation, the principal is the key person responsible for the productivity of the organization. The school, like an industrial plant,

represents a process. Raw material goes in and a product comes out. The change that occurs between input, that is the entering pupil, and output, the departing pupil, will be determined by the ways in which you apply and coordinate the available resources of your school. It is the change in the individual pupil from what he was upon entering the school to what he is when he leaves that measures the school.

How can accountability be accomplished? We know it is possible to make a quite sophisticated assessment of the academic, social, physical, emotional, vocational, intellectual, and attitudinal attributes of each child. Given this assessment and given a malleable system of education in which pupils, teachers, and technology are deployed in an infinite variety of ways, substantial change should have taken place in the child when he leaves school — provided the schools know in advance what the direction and goals of this change should be. If so, then it is simple to conceive of an equally refined set of evaluations to measure the product — that is, the degree of change that has taken place in the pupil during the years he has spent in the school.

Thus, after a number of years of working on improvements in the process of education, we are now coming closer to two ends: (1) a more efficient, effective and sensitive individual school with more and better resources for helping children to learn, and (2) more sophisticated ways to measure human potential and productivity. Approaches to these two goals are making it possible for education to be more effective and for its effectiveness

to be measured in relation to the students, the community, and its contribution to the social system at large.

### The Governance Issue

If we are able to measure what goes in and what comes out with some precision, it should have a strong bearing on governance, which is a second pressing public issue confronting schoolmen today. Governance is a term long-favored by the political scientist. Today it is being used by the men and women who pay your salaries – the parents and taxpayers in your communities. In some communities, governance is an issue being raised by your teachers. In still fewer communities, the issue is even on the minds of high school pupils.

Originally, the public schools were extensions of education in the home. Almost all the citizens in a community had a direct hand in determining school programs, hiring teachers, and establishing means of support for schools. Later schools began to be governed primarily by boards of education or school committees – bodies made up of a few citizens who accepted the responsibility for determining the general policies and programs of public education. Often, these citizens took on this task because no one else wanted it. A historian in the 1940s once remarked that education was something that most Americans wanted but did not care about, and so it was in many communities. It was not too long ago that what the school board said about curriculum, school programs, textbooks, teachers' salaries, athletic programs,

administrative style, and so forth determined both the form and substance of American public school education.

As the public schools grew to become an even more important and vital part of our way of life, many school boards and school committees realized that they could not deal with what were becoming increasingly complex matters. To a large degree, these citizen boards passed the issue of governance on to a new group – the professional administrators. The dominance of the professional administrator is perhaps the most dramatic in some of the larger city and county school systems where administrative policy and procedure have a far greater effect on the way in which schools operate than do the general policies established by the school board. In some communities, the school principal, particularly the secondary school principal, has become literally lord of the domain.

### The Role of the Community

Today, however, other forces are emerging – each wanting to play a significant role in the governance of schools. Many teachers now believe they have a right to participate in the determination of school policies and programs. The community is also striving for power and control. This is not the traditional community that schoolmen are accustomed to – the PTA, the Home and the School Association, or the Citizens Advisory Committee. The community I am referring to is not that well organized and in some cases is not even identified. Still, from the town meetings

in rural New England to the ghettos in the cities, these community forces are building and raising important questions about our schools. They ask, "How public is public education?" and "To what extent can we, the public, design the kind of education which we, the public, support?"

How the issue of governance will be resolved is not clear. Doubtlessly most of us yearn for the best of all worlds, the best of all schools, and hope that the governance of our schools is a shared responsibility among the community, the school board, the administrator, and the teacher. Some suggest adding the student, and while at the moment "student power" is not an issue in secondary education, it may soon emerge, just as it has on college and university campuses.

It may be that the issue of governance may well turn on who is to be held accountable for what comes out of our schools. After all, governance is based on responsibility, and responsibility implies accountability. If administrators are not able to account in reasonable ways for what is mandated to be done in schools, it would seem to me that they may lose their acquired rights to govern schools. After all, the schools are public. It is, therefore, easy to make a case for governance by community. If administrators default on the question of accountability, they – and particularly principals – will lose their right to govern and will become more technicians than governors.

This holds for teachers as well. Teachers do the primary work in schools and represent the majority in the professional staff. They

have a right to share in governance but just so long as they are willing to be held accountable. In fact, I am eager to see what happens when teachers' organizations realize that accountability is equated with governance. Will the demands of teachers then focus more on welfare than on program or instructional issues? Will they be anxious to be held more accountable? I do not know, but I am not encouraged by the unwillingness of some teachers to be held accountable for the progress of their pupils, any more than I am by the unwillingness of some parents to accept their share of responsibility.

Holding accountability to the level of the school may help to resolve the governance issue. After all, it is the school – whether it is Intermediate School 201 in New York City, Meadowbrook Junior High School in Newton, Massachusetts, or Oakland Technical High School in California – where the controversary over governance is taking place. Rarely do teachers and communities rise up against a class or an individual teacher on the issue of accountability. Similarly, protests at the level of school systems seldom are based on accountability. Usually, those protests have to do with more general and diffuse matters – overall costs, excessive administrative overhead, promotion rules, and so forth.

It is at the level of the school, with you as principal, where the question of governance and accountability will be most visible. It is in your school where these issues stand the best chance of being faced squarely and resolved fairly.

## RECENT FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Ford Foundation has long been engaged in supporting experimental and demonstration projects aimed at improving curriculum, organization, and training in American public school systems. Among educational innovations that have received assistance are team teaching; the use of programmed materials, educational television, and other technological resources; flexible scheduling; independent study; variations in class size; nongraded programs; the merging of vocational, academic, and general curricula; and the use of community resources to augment school programs. Recently, the Foundation's activities in public education have focused largely on improving educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth, particularly in low-income Negro sections of the cities.

The following are some recent Foundation actions that relate to the issues discussed by Mr. Meade:

—A series of grants totaling some $1.4 million to increase parent participation in the educational process in New York City. The grants, primarily for technical assistance for parent- and community-selected groups who have been given greater authority in the operation of schools, seek to stimulate a closer partnership between parents and teachers in order to relate the school program more closely to the needs of the children, to improve pupil motivation, and generally to strengthen community awareness of its stake in the school system.

—A planning grant of $390,000 to the Committee for Community Education Development in Boston for a privately run experimental school system that will operate under public auspices. A principal feature of the experiment, which will open its first school in the predominantly Negro Roxbury district in 1969, will be strong community participation in the design, administration, and operation of the system.

—Support to efforts of the University of Michigan and a private Cleveland group that seek to reduce racial and intergenerational conflict in urban and suburban high schools. Among the approaches being tested is an enlarged role for students in the conflict-resolution process.

—Assistance to joint school-university programs in New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and Detroit to train 900 National Teacher Corps applicants for ghetto teaching posts. Support also of a major study by the National Education Association of the factors that lead to successful classroom teaching by Corpsmen.

—Support to a joint New Haven Board of Education–Yale University Child Study Center elementary-school project in which behavioral scientists work closely with parents and teachers to raise the motivation and achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

—A $414,000 grant to the Educational Records Bureau for research aimed at a more reliable way of measuring mental ability. The study involves tests among 1,100 school children in Mount Vernon, N. Y., public schools, including interviews and measurements of mental ability as a function of brainwave

responses to visual stimuli.

—Sponsorship of an eighteen-country study by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement of pupil achievement in civic education, science, second-language training, reading, and literature. A previous association study of mathematical achievement has led to suggestions for curriculum reform in a number of countries.

—A grant of $221,164 to the System Development Corporation for an elementary teaching program that uses a variety of tutoring procedures – between student and student, teacher and student, and parent and student.

—A planning grant to Stanford University to develop a new program for selecting and training high-level educational administrators. The program will combine work in administration and the behavioral sciences.

—Continued support of a program begun in 1966 to identify and develop the leadership potential of educators from rural areas by providing them fellowships for a year of study, travel, visits to model projects, and work in innovative school programs. Fellows are expected to return to their home communities on completion of the program.